

# LIGHT READING

c u s t o m e r   n e w s l e t t e r

Nov/Dec 2005

## 'Tis the season for winter bills

This winter, many customers will feel the financial pinch of high heating bills. The U.S. Energy Information Administration indicated that an average customer who heats a home with natural gas could expect to pay as much as 52 percent more than last year, and an average oil home-heat customer could pay as much as 31 percent more. This is due, in part, to the impact of Hurricane Katrina on energy facilities in the Gulf of Mexico. Even before the hurricane, world demand for oil was strong.

Starting November 1, City Light rates for most customers **decrease** by about 2 percent. This change results from lower Bonneville Power Administration rates charged to City Light. We are passing the savings on to our customers.

The winter billing cycle runs October 2005 through March 2006. About half our customers heat with electricity. The colder weather will mean somewhat higher bills because of home heating. The good news is that here in the Northwest, temperatures are expected to be near normal. For more details on rates, visit:

[www.seattle.gov/light/accounts/rates/](http://www.seattle.gov/light/accounts/rates/).

Electric heating can add a lot to your bill, so be sure to turn the heat down when you are away. For a list of common causes of higher electric bills, the brochure "Why is My Electric Bill So High?" is available in several languages. Call

**(206) 684-3800.**

## We pay, you save

If you own an apartment building (5 or more units) in City Light's territory, we'll pay you **up to 70 percent** of the costs to change your common-area lighting to more efficient models. No contracts to sign, just a simple rebate. Schedule a no-obligation lighting assessment to find out how much you can save and get a free compact fluorescent bulb. For an appointment or more information, call **(206) 684-3800** or visit [www.seattle.gov/light/conserve/resident](http://www.seattle.gov/light/conserve/resident).



# Outages, behind the scenes

When winter comes, so do power outages. When they happen, our crews work around the clock in difficult conditions to restore power as quickly as possible.

In anticipation of these outages, City Light stocks up on supplies. We have our own line crews and do not contract this work out. When an outage occurs, a City Light dispatcher calls a "trouble crew" to go to the scene and evaluate the problem. As needed, they call a line-service crew to swing into action for repairs. They coordinate with our System Control Center to

de-energize and energize lines. Circuit breakers are opened and closed; power can be re-routed between substations.

We work to minimize the number of customers affected by the outage. Line crews assigned different roles work in tandem to repair and replace poles, hardware and cable. This is demanding and dangerous work, and City Light is proud of its record during emergencies. We are among the most reliable utilities in the country.



## Call for help with payments



If you need help in paying your bills, call us from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. Utility representatives can answer your payment questions and advise you on how to avoid collection. Translation services are available. Call **(206) 684-3000**.

**Payment assistance** (Note: Income guidelines apply.)

**Discount rates** For senior, disabled and income-qualified customers: **(206) 684-0268**

**Federal home heating assistance** Federal funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis approximately between the months of November and July. You can obtain detailed information, schedule and confirm appointments on this 24-hour automated line: **(866) 223-1068**

**Emergency Low-Income Assistance** One-time emergency assistance: **(206) 684-3688**

**Project Share** Emergency assistance for income-qualified customers who have received shut-off notices and have utilized the other assistance programs: **(206) 684-3000**

### Variety of payment options

**Automatic Bill Payment: (206) 733-9100** Your bill amount is automatically deducted from your checking account on the due date.

**Budget Billing Plan: (206) 684-3345** This plan is for residential and small general-service customers with zero account balances. Annual electricity charge is estimated and divided into equal monthly payments. The account is balanced once a year.

**E-Payment: (866) 873-0944** Conveniently pay your bills with selected credit or debit cards online or over the telephone. E-checks are also accepted.



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This newsletter is available in alternate formats upon request.

Call **(206) 684-3000**  
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## Streetlight trouble

This time of year, a flickering streetlight or one that does not light up can be a big concern. To report streetlight trouble, call **(206) 684-7056** or submit an online request at [www.seattle.gov/light/streetlight/](http://www.seattle.gov/light/streetlight/). Be prepared to provide the complete address of the closest residence or business, the pole number typically posted 6 to 15 feet above ground, a brief description of the problem, your name and contact number.

Our crews have more than 100,000 streetlights to maintain. Repair times can vary from four weeks in the winter to several days in the summer.



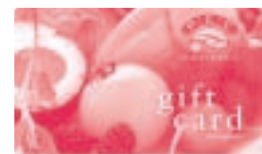
# Green Up!

## and get two gifts

Now our residential customers can Green Up their electricity. Sign up by **January 31** for one or more years and receive two special gifts — an organic-cotton tote bag and a **\$10 gift card** from *PCC Natural Markets*, one of our first commercial Green Up customers.

Through the Green Up program, you can choose to support City Light's purchase of renewable power.

We'll use the money we receive to buy new renewable resources. The cost to green up 25%, 50% or 100% of your power is \$3, \$6 or \$12 per month. To sign up, just fill out the form on the reverse side and return it with your bill payment. You can also sign up online at [www.greenupseattle.org](http://www.greenupseattle.org) or call **(206) 684-8822** for assistance.



## POWER OUTAGES



**Some outages are planned so City Light crews can safely work on the electrical system, but many occur for reasons beyond our control, such as stormy weather, car/pole accidents, objects touching power lines, birds, etc. If you experience an outage, please stay calm and follow this advice:**

- Contact City Light at **(206) 684-3020** if you are on life-sustaining equipment. Be sure to notify us with updated contact information, and have emergency power backup in good working order.
- Have a telephone that plugs directly into a phone jack. Cordless phones will not work during a power outage.
- Keep an emergency kit including flashlight, fresh batteries, wind-up clock, portable radio, mylar blanket, manual can opener.
- If your power goes out, first check your main switch or circuit panel. Know how to safely change a fuse or reset your circuit breaker.
- If you determine it is a power outage, call our Power Outage Hotline at **(206) 684-7400**. Report your outage if it is not already included on the recorded message.
- During prolonged outages, unplug electrical appliances to prevent fires and equipment damage when service is restored.
- To retain heat, dress in layers and close doors, windows, curtains and unused fireplace dampers.
- Know how to manually override electrical doors, gates, etc.
- Use battery-powered lights. Never use candles or anything with an open flame.
- Adequately vent fueled space heaters (e.g., kerosene, propane) to avoid fatal carbon monoxide gas buildup. Never use gas or charcoal grills designed for outdoor use indoors or in an unventilated space.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Discard at-risk refrigerated foods that are warmer than 45 degrees.
- If you plan to use a generator, learn how to operate it safely. Use it outdoors in a well-ventilated area. Never plug a generator into your home circuitry.
- Never touch or approach a downed wire - or anything in contact with one. Always assume the wire is live, even if severed. Stay 10 feet away; including anything you are carrying because electricity will travel through it. Call **(206) 706-0051** to report after-hours electrical emergencies.
- If a power line falls on your car, stay inside if possible, call **9-1-1** and wait for help. If you must get out, avoid touching the car and the ground at the same time. Jump out of the car then hop or shuffle, keeping feet together. Move at least 20 feet away.

# Green Up!

To sign up, just fill out this form and return it with your bill payment.

- ☐ \$3 per month, 25% participation level
- ☐ \$6 per month, 50% participation level
- ☐ \$12 per month, 100% participation level

Name _____		Phone Number _____		Email _____	
City Light Account Number _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Check box for Green Up News via email		How did you hear about Green Up Seattle? _____	
Service Address _____		City _____		State _____ Zip Code _____	
Mailing Address (if different than above) _____		City _____		State _____ Zip Code _____	
Signature _____ I agree to pay the monthly charges selected above for at least one year.					

**Questions? Call (206) 684-8822**



## Be prepared for emergencies

**Did you know that in a major disaster, you could be on your own for seven days or more? Here are some basic recommendations from the American Red Cross and other emergency organizations:**

### **Find out what could happen to you in an emergency**

- What warning signs should you look for and how should you respond? Listen to your battery-powered radio and follow the instructions of local emergency officials.
- What are the disaster plans at places where your family spends time, e.g., work, school, and daycare?

### **Create a disaster plan**

- Establish a meeting place outside your home and also one outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Know the address and phone number of the outside meeting place.
- Discuss what to do in an evacuation.
- Establish an out-of-state "family contact." Everyone must know your contact's phone number.
- Check on your neighbors, especially elderly or disabled persons.
- Keep a modest amount of cash on hand.

### **Address hazards in your home**

- Post emergency phone numbers near your phone and teach children how and when to call **9-1-1**.
- Assemble disaster supplies kit (3-7 day supply is recommended) including water and non-perishable foods (check expiration dates), a set of clothes with sturdy shoes, toiletries, matches, whistle, first-aid kit, prescription drugs as needed, shelter supplies like duct tape and plastic, entertainment items like a deck of cards.
- Keep small, portable supply kits at work and in your vehicles.
- Water is essential. Three gallons per person is the minimum you will need during the first 72 hours of a disaster. Rotate water about every six months.
- Fix potential home hazards, such as items that can fall or cause a fire.
- Know how to turn off water, gas and electricity at the main switches.
- Have fire extinguishers and know how to use and test them.
- Have smoke and carbon monoxide detectors installed near bedrooms on each level of your home. Test the batteries regularly.
- Find the safe spots within your home.
- Determine the best escape routes out of your home and conduct drills.

**For additional information, [www.rpin.org/](http://www.rpin.org/), [www.redcross.org/](http://www.redcross.org/), and [www.seattle.gov/html/citizen/preparedness.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/html/citizen/preparedness.htm)**